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**Bologna Peer Support Group on Quality National Qualifications Framework
 (TPG A on NQF)**

Second meeting, Prague 3 June, 2019

Minutes

List of participants

Country / Institution	Family name(s)	First name
Albania	Xhuvani	Aleksander
Armenia	Karabekyan	Samvel
Azerbaijan	Gurbanova	Vusala
Belarus	Artemyeva	Svetlana
Belgium Flemish Community	De Decker	Frederik
Croatia	Beljo Lučić	Ružica
Czech Republic	Fliegl	Tomáš
Czech Republic	Kotásková	Tereza
Czech Republic	Trojanova	Lucie
EI - ETUCE	Rakkestad	Ole Espen
Estonia	Pukk	Janne
ESU	Skadborg	Monika
ESU	Soler	Beatriz
EURASHE	Karpisek	Michal
European Commission	Azzara	Zelda

Country / Institution	Family name(s)	First name
European Commission	Engels-Perenyi	Klara
Finland	Blomqvist	Carita
Georgia	Margishvili	Lasha
Georgia	Panchulidze	Ketevan
Germany	Tauch	Christian
Greece	Papadopoulou	Elena
Hungary	Beke	Márton
Kazakhstan	Nurmagambetov	Amantay
Malta	Mifsud	Marius
Romania	Postavaru	Nicolae
Serbia	Pazun	Jelena
Spain	de Lezcano-Mújica Núñez	Margarita
BFUG Secretariat	Iglesias de Ussel Rubio	Rocío
BFUG Secretariat	Kahani Subashi	Edlira Adi

Apologies from Andorra, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Council of Europe (CoE), North Macedonia, Poland and Turkey.

1. Welcome and address by the host and the Co-chairs

The Czech Co-chair welcomed participants and emphasized the fact of the program of the meeting being modified to make the meeting and discussions of the TPG A on QF more interesting and to enable vivid discussions to the topics included on the program.

Tomáš Fliegl, in representation of the Czech Ministry of Education, highlighted the great opportunity and the importance that the Ministry of Education is thrilled to Co-chair this group. He informed participants on some activities which has been taking place in the framework of this group. Czech Republic not only has worked to prepare these activities, but also has used them as a learning opportunity to further implement the Bologna Process key commitments and all aspects of QF, self-certification and ECTS.

The Finnish Co-chair Carita Blomqvist emphasized the progress made so far on the subject of the TPG A on QF work while inviting all participants to share with their peer colleagues the progress made on national level by each of the countries, to enable vivid discussions.

2. Update on the recent development (BFUG and BICG)

The participants were informed about the BFUG meeting that took place on 4-5 April 2019 in Bucharest. At the BFUG meeting, the BICG gave a report of the activities of the three TPGs. Work in the peer groups should focus on the implementation activities and should involve both national authorities and national stakeholders. Peer Group members are requested to establish a good link (regular meetings, follow-up activities) with the national authorities and relevant stakeholders of their countries. There is a need on identifying the demands and challenges, and all the group members should be encouraged to interact and cooperate between themselves, finding ideas for the coming call for projects.

Tereza Kotásková informed about the umbrella project that was submitted together with two other partners. This project has been approved by the European Commission and it will facilitate the work of the Thematic Peer Group. Several meetings will be covered by this umbrella project, including two meetings of the group and covering expenses for participants. Also some workshops and PLAs will be organized under this project, including the next PLA on 21-22 October 2019 in Berlin organized by the German Rectors' Conference, a PLA organized in autumn by ESU and a PLA that will be organized in Prague, with the hope that these activities will help to identify what could be done to improve the work of the TPG A on QF.

3. Summary and outcomes of the May 2019 workshop on self-certification of NQF

The Co-chairs informed about a workshop that took place on 3 May 2019 in Prague. It was organized as an *ad hoc* event according to the interest expressed by some countries to work deeper on self-certification. Eight countries were present and two international experts were invited, in order to have an interaction and exchange needs and challenges from each country. The discussions were vivid, and the dynamics of the group was intense, with three countries identifying themselves to work on common ground in the specific issues raised from the country input.

The Finnish Co-chair emphasized the fact that small number of countries didn't diminish the importance of the workshop. Some countries discussed the needs, while some other gave their experience. Workshop served to discuss concrete criteria throughout the time dedicated, with Germany and Finland sharing their experience. Discussions raised the fact that governments are not the only actors, while HEIs have a crucial role in self-certification, as they are the ones effected directly. The process should give a clear understanding of all involved in the process. The purpose is to continue to discuss on practical ways to self-certification, trying to cope with challenges and finding solutions when it comes to the process in the NQF.

4. Next steps in the TPG A on QF

The Umbrella project foresees three PLA activities. The Czech Co-chair gave the floor to the members who gave information on the coming PLA activities. Germany briefed participants on the organizing of the PLA conference in Berlin on 21-22 October 2019. The registration is opened to a limited number of participants, to ensure maximum engagement and outcome of the conference.

Germany self-certified to the QF EHEA in 2007. In the recent years there are ongoing discussions on increasing the permeability between the VET and higher education. This raised the necessity to discuss and clarify the essence of the HE. Discussions covered also the use of the learning outcomes approach, permeability and recognition of prior learning.

In the PLA in October Germany will present the new NQF and discuss it also with the PLA members, asking their opinion, aiming to assist Germany on the entire process. A session on self-certification in other countries will be included in the programme. There will be one or two specific NQFs presented during the PLA, asking participants to raise questions, express their opinion and give recommendations. Those interested in participation, should register the soonest

ESU will host a PLA in November 2019, with more practical information to follow at a later stage. The topic will be the involvement of stakeholders and ESU will ask peer group members to fill in a survey in this topic, which will help to finalise the programme.

5. Tour de table: needs for support and plans for the next steps in each country, possibility to ask experts for advice and views on national challenges.

Kazakhstan presented its state of play on self-certification and inquired whether there were colleagues available to act as international experts giving comments on the framework. The chair of the group insisted on the importance of involving international experts in the self-certification process and on the engagement of stakeholders to succeed.

In the Czech Republic, the qualifications framework was developed but not fully implemented, although some HEIs are already using it and link new study programmes to the QF. The connection to QA is missing so it would be interesting to exchange experience with other peer group members. Also the identification of relevant stakeholders is a point to work on.

Croatia shared the overview of the Croatian NQF, that is used as a reform tool to reform tool for their HE qualifications. QA plays an important role in their system – now working on a new QA law, where they want to include the link to qualification standards.

In Belgium Flemish Community, they have an obligatory domain-specific reference framework for all domains.

Hungary - The self-certification was implemented successfully in Hungary, but recently there is a lack of capacities in the ministry, and there is the need to revive the process further.

6. Announcement of a new Call for projects (CfP) and match-making for cooperation

The European Commission informed about the results of the previous Call for the implementation of EHEA reforms where 14 projects were selected for all the TPGs. The TPG A on QF applied for one project that was selected. All participating countries are welcome to apply to the new Call, to be published the week following the meeting. The call for proposals aims to support the implementation of the key commitments of the Bologna Process and the commitments laid down in the *Paris Communiqué*:

innovation in learning & teaching, , social dimension, etc. Activities could be about peer support, national interest cooperation activities to implement the reforms (it could be used for projects tackling the topic of legislation, or similar actions). Applicants can be the Erasmus+ program countries and BFUG Consultative Members. Countries can submit applications in partnership with at least one more country. Organisations have to include at least 2 countries in their partnership. Partners can be from all EHEA countries, including those that are no programme countries of Erasmus+. Stakeholder's involvement on national level should be ensured, to foster project implementation.

EURASHE informed on a possibility to submit a project regarding the Short Cycle, modifying the already submitted project previously. The main concern remains the difference approaches to short cycle in the various countries. Countries are welcome to participate as partners.

7. Discussion in smaller groups on possible co-operation on new projects

The participants were divided into two groups to discuss possible cooperation for future projects.

Three subjects/subthemes for each country, based on the country input/Action Plan. 1st group dedicated its discussions to the NQF, while the 2nd group dedicated its discussions to the short cycle qualifications and self-certification

On the first group the discussion was concentrated mostly on the state of art of the developments of the NQF of each country. Participants shared the state of art in their respective countries and expressed the interest to participate at the PLA meeting in Berlin.

Georgia shared the information on the changes of the law on NQF, with the new law and NQF being implemented. There is a new Twinning project which just started on the subject, with mandatory results the revision of implementation, update of the NQF regulations and the electronic register of all qualifications' database. The aim is to have a detail ECTS manual and the NQF to be more transparent.

In Armenia, the planning of developing a second level of qualifications is being implemented, even though there are many difficulties especially in regard to the process of developing the NQF. There is the need to answer many issues raised along the process on how to move forward and the need of support on organizing with the partners. This year there is the planning to start analyzing the situation in the Higher Education Institutions

From the discussions and the state of art of these two countries, considering there are many areas of common interest, both countries are interested to invite a third country, which already has undergone through the process, which could assist them on overpassing the obstacles and problems.

Spain informed that NQF for the higher Education is in place two years by now, and it was impossible to have it before for the rest of education system. The work is going to enable an agreement for the NQF regarding non higher education institutions. There is the possibility to get access to the Higher Education with the professional qualifications, but credits taken in the vocational educational and training are not recognised. There is only 15% of the studies recognized for academic studies and

there is an ongoing discussion in Spain in order to enable the recognition of more than the current percentage. In Spain this distance learning is part of the ministry, and the quality is controlled by the same agencies that control the “normal” universities.

The second group discussions were concentrated mostly on the countries, members of the TPG, rather than the consultative members.

Finland shared with the group members their experience on the establishment of their QF. The first preparations for the EHEA QF were interlined in 2005 with work on the EQF, immediately going to the overarching framework. Legal implications were carried out from the very beginning, since it was a topic to be considered from the very beginning of the work. VET is well structured over 30 years by now in Finland. VET graduates have access to HE studies, with lots of cooperation among key stakeholders, ECVET and ECTS are in place and are compatible. The self-certification report was prepared by the experts' groups, it was sent out for reviews and it was taken in a pragmatic way. Ministry involvement was through some extra funding for the work of the committee. The implementation is still there.

Belgium Flemish Community member emphasized the fact that short cycle has been in existence for quite a while with legal framework established in 2009. The process is at the level that from next academic year the short cycle would be part of the whole NQF. Very much interested to learn from others on work-based learning, how to quality assured those learning. Offer experience with the transition they went through for the short cycle. Legal requirements are that at least 1/3 of the learnings would be carried out outside the academic world.

EURASHE shared with participants the experience on the concept on work-based learning, mentioning that while the idea is great, the reality is far from ideal. Businesses find it a huge burden to take care of someone outside of the place of work, QA needs to be developed further and EURASHE is working on seven projects for the work-based learning. The triangle students, school and business is not balanced. While it is always easy to make the agreements without the students, there is the need to involve them on a more active role. There is an ongoing work for a joint charter of work-based learning.

Hungary expressed interested on credit recognition and how countries deal with it. In this aspect, the Belgium Flemish representative shared the experience of having included in their legislation to accept all credits into HE studies.

Georgia briefly informed on the development of the NQF work from 2010, with the need on revising the NQF which goal is to not have any gap between HE and VET qualifications.

Croatia informed on the topic of short cycle as part of HE in the HE laws and NQF. It is on level 5 of NQF. The HE system is binary, and the problem stands between the professional and academic programs. There are ongoing efforts to put into law the work-based learning, due to the problems already mentioned in the discussions. HEIs having full autonomy and students upon finishing their bachelor's degree, are not able to follow HE studies. There are certain criteria for acceptance, such as closeness to the major, etc.

Albania informed on the new law in which all HEIs should propose Short cycle education at level 5, 6, and 7. There is the initiative of the Albanian Bologna Group on how to recognize on short cycle qualifications. The discussions are based on the number of hours, LOs to deliver a certificate, recognized by the national authority. Self-certificate is ongoing process and by the end of the year we should be have the report

ready. The main challenge is to recognize the short cycle on HE.

At the end of discussions, two groups gathered on plenary session. Co-chairs gave a summary of the topics discussed in small groups. Finnish Co-chair emphasized that for the short cycle discussions the main challenge is QA, organization of short cycle studies, how to organize the work-based learning the passing from short cycle to HE studies and recognition of short cycle studies. The group discussed for the need to recognize work-based learning. Most of the countries have self-reference in place, therefore the most part of the discussions was addressed to the short cycle in HE.

The Czech Co-chair summarized the discussions in the small group by emphasizing the subject of short cycle, as everything is interlinked.

Any other business AOB

It was announced that the third meeting is planned for January 2020.

A PLA on short cycle will be organized jointly by EURASHE and the Portuguese government in September 2019.

End of the meeting

The Czech Co-chair wrapped up the meeting by thanking all participants and the lively discussions to such an important topic.